

Sample Op-Ed

This sample op-ed for National Prevention Week is written specifically about underage drinking, but you can write an op-ed about any National Prevention Week topic that is most relevant to your community. Make sure to include recent statistics for the appropriate substance or mental health issue.

Word count: **[INSERT FINAL WORD COUNT OF OP-ED TEXT, e.g., 521]**

It's Up to All of Us to Prevent Underage Drinking in **[INSERT COMMUNITY]**

In 2015, nearly a quarter of people ages 12 to 20 (7.7 million, or 20.3 percent of this age group) reported drinking alcohol in the past month.¹ The consequences of underage drinking can be calamitous, contributing to the untimely, alcohol-related deaths of people under age 21 from homicides, suicides, car crashes, and drowning.²

Media campaigns are one effective way of counteracting advertising and messages in entertainment media that glorify underage drinking. However, youth also deserve to hear positive messages from people they know and who care about them. Being involved in kids' lives and talking to them about substance use can make a difference. Studies have shown that parents have a significant influence on young people's decisions about alcohol consumption,³ especially when parents create supportive and nurturing environments in which their children can make their own decisions.⁴

The words and actions of one person can make a positive difference in the lives of others. Every day, parents, caregivers, educators, and community leaders in **[INSERT COMMUNITY]** can make a difference by having conversations with youth about substance use and by modeling healthy choices and behaviors. **[INSERT LOCAL STATISTIC, E.G., NUMBER OF LOCAL YOUTH DRINKING UNDERAGE AND/OR ADMITTED TO TREATMENT FACILITIES, NUMBER OF INJURIES/DEATHS RESULTING FROM UNDERAGE DRUNK DRIVING ACCIDENTS].**

¹ Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality. (2016). *Key substance use and mental health indicators in the United States: Results from the 2015 National Survey on Drug Use and Health* (HHS Publication No. SMA 16-4984, NSDUH Series H-51). Retrieved from <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/NSDUH-FFR1-2015/NSDUH-FFR1-2015/NSDUH-FFR1-2015.pdf>

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2013). *Alcohol-Related Disease Impact (ARDI)* [Online application]. Retrieved from https://nccd.cdc.gov/DPH_ARDI/Default/Default.aspx

³ Nash, S. G., McQueen, A., & Bray, J. H. (2005). Pathways to adolescent alcohol use: Family environment, peer influence, and parental expectations. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 37*(1), 19–28.

⁴ Barnes, G. M., Reifman, A. S., Farrell, M. P., & Dintcheff, B. A. (2000). The effects of parenting on the development of adolescent alcohol misuse: A six-wave latent growth model. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 62*(1), 175–186.

As individuals and as a community, we can help prevent underage drinking by being involved in young people's lives; identifying resources, support systems, and alternatives for youth in the community; and raising awareness about the importance of prevention.

On **[INSERT DATE]**, **[INSERT ORGANIZATION]** will host a health fair at **[INSERT LOCATION]** at **[INSERT TIME]** as part of National Prevention Week—a national observance sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The health fair will embrace the National Prevention Week 2017 theme, "Making Each Day Count." This event will bring teens and their caregivers together along with **[COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP, EDUCATORS, HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS, SUBSTANCE USE PREVENTION AND TREATMENT SPECIALISTS, REPRESENTATIVES FROM LOCAL RECREATIONAL CENTERS, INTRAMURAL SPORTS LEAGUES, YOUTH GROUPS, AND FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS]** to spark conversation about underage drinking and support healthy decision-making among youth.

This event is a great opportunity for members of **[INSERT COMMUNITY]** to raise awareness about this important issue, emphasize healthy choices, and encourage each other to make a meaningful difference in our own lives, our children's lives, and our community. We can make each day count—the small, daily actions done by individuals, combined with the actions of families, communities, and coalitions, come together to make up the larger, bold movement of prevention.

[INSERT NAME] is the **[INSERT TITLE]** of the **[INSERT ORGANIZATION]** in **[INSERT CITY/TOWN/COMMUNITY]**. He/she can be reached at **[INSERT E-MAIL]** or **[INSERT PHONE NUMBER]**.